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Central Intelligence Agency

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## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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## Poland: The Church on the Defensive

Relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the regime of General Jaruzelski have worsened in the past year and a half as the regime has intensified efforts to curb activist priests, hinder the Church's access to the media, and generally limit its influence in society. While some of these efforts may be seen as irritants, others in areas such as new church construction and the teaching of religion touch upon the Church's vital interests. There is evidence that both the Soviets and Polish critics are urging Jaruzelski to rein in the Church. By adopting a tougher posture vis-a-vis the Church, Jaruzelski probably hopes to placate his critics and show that the situation is stabilizing. Jaruzelski, however, recognizes the constraints on his ability to crack down on or even confront the Church openly. Foremost is the government's continuing need for the Church as an ally in preserving domestic stability and encouraging economic recovery. Poland's need for assistance from the West to help it overcome its deep economic crisis has also inhibited government actions.

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In our view, such considerations will not deter the Jaruzelski regime from its long-term aim of eroding the power of the only legal and independent opposition force in Poland. If Church leaders conclude that regime pressure threatens their key interests, they probably will try to buy some respite with concessions such as withdrawing their long-standing objections to opening diplomatic relations between Warsaw and the Vatican. But even if the Church hierarchy takes a more conciliatory stance, we believe local clerics and some bishops will continue to resist blatant government efforts to curb the Church's power. [REDACTED]

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[redacted]

Poland's communist authorities have routinely made concessions to the Roman Catholic Church during periods of crisis to gain its cooperation in restoring public calm. In the wake of the bloody worker riots in Poznan in 1956, the new Party Chief, Wladyslaw Gomulka, released Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski from prison, reinstated the Church's right to teach religion in state schools and nominate its own bishops, and returned the influential weekly newspaper, Tygodnik Powszechny, to its Church-backed editors. Again, following unrest on the Baltic Coast in December 1970, Party Chief Edward Gierek permitted the construction of more than 150 new churches, cancelled an enormous tax debt levied on the Catholic University of Lublin, and allowed more pilgrims to travel to Rome. Gierek abolished personal property reporting requirements for individual dioceses and transferred the legal rights to church buildings in the formerly German Western Territories to the Church. [redacted]

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Just as the authorities resorted to concessionary policies in times of crisis, they retreated from them when the crisis passed. Thus, soon after the events of 1956, Gomulka halted church construction, impeded religious instruction, and drafted seminarians into the army. In 1967 he blocked a visit by Pope Paul VI to celebrate Poland's millenium of Christianity. Gierek also tightned the screws on the Church in 1973 over construction permits and catechism. [redacted]

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#### Church Gains During The Solidarity Era

The Church emerged stronger in authority from the Solidarity era than from any of the other previous crisis periods in post-war Poland. With the abolition of Solidarity, the regime was compelled to show both at home and abroad that it was conducting a dialogue with the Church to solve the country's deep political and economic problems. The authorities demonstrated this by:

- o convening the Joint Church-State Commission after a 13-year hiatus. It has been meeting regularly for the past six years.
- o convening periodic meetings between the Head of the Polish Church, Jozef Cardinal Glemp, and Polish party leader Jaruzelski. Earlier this year, they held their 13th meeting.
- o exempting seminarians from military service and removing virtually all barriers for travel abroad by the clergy on Church business.

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- o negotiating with the Church over its fund to aid private agriculture and offering to reserve as many as 50 seats in parliament for clerics or Church-backed candidates in the 1985 election, according to the US Embassy.
- o enlarging the Church's access to the media by broadcasting Sunday mass on state radio for the first time since 1949 and permitting an increase in the number and circulation of Church publications.
- o permitting the construction of about 1,000 new churches, the largest such program in Europe, and exempting the Church from some taxes on its income gathering.
- o permitting an expansion of religious instruction while dropping efforts at state supervision of catechism classes. The Catholic University of Lublin was also allowed to enlarge its enrollment and curriculum. [redacted]

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### The Current Status

The anticipated crackdown on the Church in the post-martial law period has not come. Jaruzelski still needs the Church because of the country's deep political and economic problems, but he continues to look for ways to curb the Church's power and hold over the populace. Among the regime's more visible moves have been harassment and investigation of militant clerics, although priests are rarely prosecuted and convicted. The Bishop of Gdansk, for example, told US Embassy officers that he routinely ignores the injunctions of local authorities to curb the activities of Father Jankowski, Lech Walesa's adviser and the most prominent of the clergymen the authorities claim are overstepping the law. The few priests who are in prison have been convicted of criminal offenses and [redacted]

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[redacted] are not political prisoners. The regime has sought to impede the Church's activities in the countryside by refusing to agree to the Church's plan to aid private agriculture. Despite regime efforts, the Church reportedly has extended its influence in the countryside through the creation of "agricultural circles" at the parish level. In an emotionally charged move, the authorities also removed crucifixes from classrooms and other public buildings. To keep this from escalating into a national church-state confrontation -- as sit-ins organized by local clergy in 1984 almost did -- the Episcopate has been trying to settle such incidents at the local level. [redacted]

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### Subtle Tactics

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[redacted]

While some of these actions are only irritants, the regime is trying to put the Church on the defensive through a low-key campaign that apparently is calculated to avoid a major confrontation but nonetheless poses a long-term threat to the Church's vital interests. [redacted]

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Church Property. We believe Warsaw is taking steps that can endanger the Church's ownership over its property. Our Consulate in Poznan reports that the state's position in the trial of thieves who stole parts of the silver sarcophagus of the patron saint of Poland from Gniezno Cathedral last spring indicates the government has laid claim to ownership of Church property in the name of protecting national treasures. In Krakow, a city of many historical churches endangered by a catastrophic environmental situation, the local press has recently made clear that the law is on the side of the state in its claim to be the protector of Church property. Early this year, the state confiscated the property of a priest in lieu of a heavy fine he had incurred for leading a student sit-in to protest the removal of a crucifix from a classroom. [redacted]

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The state may also be abandoning its long-held reluctance to enforce tax laws on Church property. Coercive tax laws aimed against the Church have been on the books since 1969, but they have not been enforced because the Episcopate told the clergy not to pay them and the regime acquiesced to avoid a confrontation with the Church. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] The problems of getting insurance and paying property taxes figured prominently in the recent meeting of pastors of the Warsaw diocese chaired by Cardinal Glemp. [redacted]

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The authorities have also renewed their efforts to prevent the construction of church buildings the Episcopate contends it needs to adequately serve the faithful in a country with the highest birth rate in Europe. In the Warsaw diocese, according to the Church press, new church construction has encountered obstacles in the acquisition of state-sold building materials and new sources of financing which, up to now, has come from the donations of churchgoers at home and abroad. At the same time, Warsaw municipal authorities have reneged on agreements made in 1982 for the construction of new churches in as many as seven large housing estates. According to Embassy reports and the Church press, other dioceses report problems with the authorities over the completion of some of the 1,000 churches permitted in 1981 and failure to secure government permission for the next

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five-year building plan -- an issue that was discussed at the last meeting of the Joint Commission on 23 September. [REDACTED]

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Atheism classes. In contrast to its predecessors, the regime is not trying to suppress the teaching of religion and has decided instead to teach atheism in the schools this year under the guise of "comparative religion." The Church is clearly concerned over this new program, possibly because it fears the inroads it can make among Poland's demoralized youth. Cardinal Glemp told an American visitor last month that the courses are a violation of the concept of the ideologically neutral school -- the Church will not teach religion in the classroom just as the state should not teach atheism. At the same time, Glemp is worried over the appeal the regime's materialistic philosophy would have for students because of the "gentler methods" the teachers would employ. In its public statements on the new courses, the hierarchy has admitted that some of the faithful would succumb to the authorities' ideological offensive. [REDACTED]

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#### Jaruzelski's Agenda

Jaruzelski has compelling reasons to avoid openly confronting the Church. As the only legal institution that enjoys a high degree of popular legitimacy, the Church figures prominently in Jaruzelski's plans for establishing a dialogue with the populace. According to Embassy reporting, he wants the Church to endorse candidates for his proposed Social Consultative Council to advise the Council of State. Moreover, in view of deep economic problems, Jaruzelski has been forced to heed the wishes of Western governments who made the lifting of political and economic sanctions partly contingent upon the maintenance of a dialogue between the government and the Church. [REDACTED]

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By pressuring the Church on property ownership and teaching religion, the authorities may also be trying to induce the Church to be more forthcoming on the issue of establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Such a relationship would significantly bolster the regime's legitimacy and international prestige. The regime's stalling on the much-discussed legislation to give the Church a legal status -- something the Episcopate has wanted to protect its interests since the termination of the Concordat between the Polish Government and the Vatican in 1945 -- may be designed in part to induce the Church to accept Warsaw's establishment of ties with the Vatican.

[redacted] the issues of diplomatic relations and legal status were linked at the last Glomp-Jaruzelski summit in April, and the Pope will not agree to send a Nuncio to Warsaw until the legal status issue has been settled. The Polish Church has traditionally resisted the naming of a Papal representative to Poland, fearing that he could circumvent the Polish bishops and deal directly with the government, possibly sacrificing the interests of the Polish Church to an unsympathetic Pope's desire to reach some accommodation with the Communist government. [redacted]

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#### The View of the Church Hierarchy

In conversations with US Embassy officials, senior Polish clerics generally characterize the present church-state relationship as "strained." [redacted]

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[redacted] Glomp is frustrated over the regime's failure to agree to the Church's plan for private agriculture and proposed legislation to given the Church a legal status. While the government insists it wants the Church to help the country emerge from the crisis, a senior lay adviser to Cardinal Glomp recently complained publicly, it ignores the Church's political and economic proposals. [redacted]

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The Bishops thus far have resisted direct involvement in politics despite the government's insistence that they begin to shoulder some of the responsibility for Poland's basket case economy and deep political crisis. [redacted] the Church may be prepared to endorse officially candidates for the proposed government advisory council may mean the Episcopate is willing to associate itself with a regime undertaking of questionable sincerity not to further its own interests, but to promote a dialogue between the populace and the authorities. [redacted]

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#### Prospects

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The Church will continue to promote dialogue between the regime and the populace while adhering to the Vatican's injunctions against direct political involvement of the Church in state institutions. Top Church officials will work toward national reconciliation even though they stand to gain little from the process. On the contrary, extremist elements within the clergy and the secular opposition will almost certainly criticize Cardinal Glemp and other bishops for working too closely with the authorities. [ ]

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If the Church feels sufficiently threatened, it will probably accept the condition of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Warsaw and the Vatican in return for securing a legal status that would give it some short-term protection from the government. In 1949, the late Cardinal Wyszynski went so far as to agree to support the collectivization of Poland's private farms -- a concession that would be unthinkable today -- in return for a few years of security when he believed the survival of the Church was at stake under Poland's Stalinist government. Cardinal Glemp and others in the Episcopate are under no illusions as to the long-term benefits of a legal status and probably believe that the regime would use such a document for its own ends, ignoring it or reinterpreting it as needed. Nevertheless, many Polish clerics are coming around to the view that it is simply a matter of time before diplomatic ties are established, [ ] A likely visit by Jaruzelski to Rome and the Vatican in the near future probably will provide the opportunity to discuss the establishment of diplomatic relations and the legal status. [ ]

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Warsaw is likely to increase pressure in areas that affect the Church's vital interests but do not draw the attention of the West. Always reluctant to take on two opponents at once, the regime will tighten the screws on the Church as it perceives the secular opposition movement, and especially Solidarity's underground wing, growing more fragmented and isolated from the populace. The authorities are probably convinced that the Church will be reluctant to openly stand up to the regime for fear that it would provoke popular resistance to the government and lead to violence. The authorities may be miscalculating, however. Although the discipline of the clergy is one of the hallmarks of the Polish Church, local clerics as well as some of their superiors could be counted on to resist government efforts to weaken the Church's position. Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk of the Przemyśl diocese on the Soviet border, for example, earned his reputation as a militant in the 1970s by ordering the faithful to build dozens of churches and chapels in defiance of the

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government's ban on new church construction -- a move that sometimes resulted in pitched battles between parishioners and the police. 

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